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News Release

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Kentucky surges ahead in efforts to help build domestic battery industry

Industry veteran Ralph Brodd picked to lead manufacturing R&D center

FRANKFORT, Ky. (July 16, 2010) – Governor Steve Beshear announced today that respected battery industry veteran Dr. Ralph Brodd has been selected to lead the Kentucky-Argonne National Battery Manufacturing Research and Development Center. The center is a partnership among the Argonne National Laboratory, the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky.

"Dr. Brodd literally has written the book on advanced battery technologies, and I am excited by his willingness to help us develop a renowned battery manufacturing research and development center here in the Commonwealth," said Gov. Beshear. "Our partnership with the leading national laboratory on battery technologies, and the expertise of researchers at the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville, will help move Kentucky to the forefront of energy storage capabilities to strengthen our automotive industry and improve the potential for renewable energy technologies."

The center will help develop and deploy a domestic supply of advanced battery technologies for vehicle applications that will aid in securing U.S. energy independence, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help in strengthening the economy. Gov. Beshear announced formation of the Battery Manufacturing R & D Center in April 2009. Argonne is the federal government's lead laboratory for applied advanced battery R&D.

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"The ultimate goal of this facility is to help establish a strong and profitable U.S.-based battery industry by helping domestic manufacturers bridge the gap between research and commercialization of advanced batteries for electric vehicles," said Argonne Director Eric Isaacs. "With that objective in mind, the selection of Ralph to lead the buildup of the center was both obvious and strategic. Ralph's decades of experience clearly demonstrate his expertise in applying scientific research findings to battery technologies and then deploying those into the marketplace."

Brodd said he is looking forward to leading the development of the Battery Manufacturing R&D Center. "I look at this appointment as an opportunity for me to make a contribution to the United States. The U.S. is behind the rest of the world in developing electric vehicles and batteries for them and it will be difficult to catch up. Advanced batteries and the materials in them are the key element to vehicle electrification. We are beginning to see the development of a battery industry because of the stimulus package but we have a long way to go."

The center's aim is to help remedy that situation. "It's going to bring out the best of Kentucky's efforts to further develop the Commonwealth's manufacturing base and create jobs, and of Argonne and its broad-based and world-class energy storage R&D program," Brodd said. The center will focus on the transition of advanced battery technologies for vehicles from basic and applied scientific R&D to real-world application in plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles, Brodd said.

"We'll take battery materials, such as those developed by Argonne, and then work with battery companies to scale-up their battery materials production from the research bench level to the commercial scale," Brodd said.

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Leader for Argonne-Kentucky battery facility—add two

"While research organizations and universities produce significant quantities of battery materials for study and experimentation, it measures only in the grams to kilograms," Brodd said. "Commercial manufacturers will produce hundreds and thousands of tons of materials. The problem with scaling up battery materials production is that the battery chemistry's phenomena may differ from what is produced for laboratory use. The center will have a pivotal role in resolving this and related issues that will enable U.S. battery manufacturers to produce affordable, reliable, safe and energy-dense materials for advanced batteries."

Brodd's career has crisscrossed industry and government and has involved the research, development, commercialization and marketing of battery and fuel cell technologies. He has served as a technical adviser to and research reviewer for the National Research Council, U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), NASA, the National Institutes of Health and the International Electrotechnical Commission.

Brodd most recently was president of Broddarp of Nevada Inc., a consulting firm he formed in 1998 that specializes in technology assessment, strategic planning and battery technology, production and marketing. His clients have included Amoco and DOE. Brodd received a doctorate in physical chemistry from the University of Texas at Austin and has held research, management and advisory positions at the National Bureau of Standards (now the National Institutes of Standards and Technology), the LTV Research Center for Ling Temco Vought Inc., Union Carbide Corp., Gould Inc., and Valence Technology Inc.

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